Choose any one theory of second language learning and critically discuss it, drawing out pedagogical implications from its claim(s).

Your essay should cover at least the following:

(a) a description of it’s claims

(b) a critical discussion of the claims

(c) your evaluation of whether the theory offers you any useful insights that you could incorporate into your teaching.

2000~2500 words

Due Date: Monday, 22nd June, 2007
Culture and language appear to be inextricably intertwined in a complex relationship. When an individual attempts to learn a second language, they are forced to not only contend with the linguistic elements of a language, but to the social and psychological variables that present themselves. Brown (2007) asserts that culture is deeply ingrained within us, and that language is the most visible and available expression of it. There appears to be, however, some discussion as to the exact place of the social context within the area of second language acquisition (SLA). The debate centers on whether social factors can be considered separately in SLA or whether they should be included under individual learner differences. Schumann’s (1978) theory of Acculturation attempts to place the social factors in the forefront, as a separate component to consider within language acquisition. Schumann (1978) outlines within the acculturation model a number of variables to consider in second language learning (SLL) and in culture learning, which will be outlined in this essay. This model can also be contrasted with two other models; the Inter-group model and the Socio-educational Model that together with the Acculturation model make up what Ellis (1994) puts forward as the three basic areas that account for the role of social factors in SLA. One area of contention is that Schumann’s acculturation model is limited in scope, to only a second language-learning situation, and not a foreign language situation. Yet, aspects of his model may have significant educational implications for all SLA. It is the contention of this investigation into the acculturation model to look into how it could actually work in SLA in both natural settings and within the classroom. It is hoped that this short critique of Schumann’s (1978) model will draw out pedagogical implications for both the second language
(SL) and foreign language (FL) classroom. It is anticipated that these pedagogical findings could be helpful to instructors in developing a framework to consider within any multi-cultural situation.

According to Schumann (1986 as sited in Mangubhai 2007), there are two kinds of acculturation. One that leads to social integration, and having psychological openness to accept input more readily, and the other that sees the TL group as the desired kind of lifestyle and values (This category may not need someone to actually live in the TL environment).

Schumann’s acculturation hypothesis hence focuses on two main variables that account for differences in the way language learners approach and acquire language. The first of which are social factors, and second are psychological factors. They differ in that Social variables account for the degree of social distance a L2 learner has to the target language (TL) and the psychological variables that are concerned with an individuals response to the conditions they find themselves, in their language learning (Ushioda, 1993).

Schumann and other theorists describe social distance as an individual’s position or perceived position, in relation to the target language group, and the extent to which they become part of that TL group (Schumann, 1986; Damen, 1987; Ushioda, 1993; Ellis, 1994; Brown, 2007). Also Schumann (1976, as cited in Peirce, 1995) talks of social distance as being a key aspect to gauge the amount of acculturation, and hence how effective a learner is at picking up an L2. This distance is not static, but can be thought of as lying along a continuum from maximum distance to close proximity to the TL group. Schumann places both social and affective factors on similar scales,
and makes the assertion that a learner’s success in second language learning is
dependant on the amount of acculturation; the degree to which they have reduced the
Schumann’s idea that the greater the social distance between two cultures, the greater
the difficulty in learning a second language.

According to Schumann (1976 as cited in Ushioda 1993), there is a taxonomy of eight
factors which control social distance that determine how close an individual will come
to becoming like the TL group:

1. **Dominance/subordination:** Relating to the perceive status of a group in
   relation to another.

2. **Integration pattern:** Assimilation (giving up your own lifestyle in favor
   of another) /acculturation/preservation (how much of your own culture
   you hold on to),

3. **Degree of enclosure of both groups:** Amount that the L2 group share the
   same social facilities (low enclosure), or have different social facilities
   (high enclosure).

4. **Degree of cohesiveness of 2LL group:** intra group contacts (cohesive),
   or inter group contacts (non-cohesive)

5. **Size of 2LL.**

6. **Degree of congruence of the two cultures:** The culture of the L2 group
   may be similar or different to the TL group.

7. **Inter-group attitudinal evaluations:** Positive or negative attitudes to
   each other.
8. **Intended length of residence of 2LL group members:** Whether the L2 group intends to stay a long time or a short time.

(Ushioda 1993; Ellis 1994)

Looking at the above list I am reminded how many of the Osaka YMCA JSL teachers talk of how their Chinese students have pride in knowing more Chinese characters than the Japanese, and that these Chinese students feel little need to learn the intricacies of Japanese Kanji (Japanese style characters that have their origin in China). These teachers have noticed a tendency for these students to be quite liberal with mistakes in their writing, possibly because the learners do not consider it important to make changes to the kanji they have already learned (as the Chinese kanji is close enough). This could illustrate point number 1 above, in that the dominance they feel about their writing system may prevent them from accepting a different way of writing the Chinese characters. Some would indicate an alternative viewpoint, in that the congruence between the two cultures may make it easier for the Chinese students to learn Japanese. This is quite a good point, and explains why the Chinese seem to be a lot faster in the initial stages of learning Japanese, yet doesn’t quite account for the observation noticed by the YMCA JSL teachers.

The amount of time one spends in another culture can be said to influence the degree to which one learns a second language. If the perceived time is only short, then learners may feel that it is not necessary to go to the effort of learning a language beyond only survival phrases. Some short-term residents to Japan don’t seem to feel the need to learn Japanese, because they know that they will only be staying in Japan
a short time. Many JET program workers, having a sort term contract fit into this category, highlighting Schumann’s last point above.

Other long-term foreign residents in Japan tend to fall into a mode of resisting cultural adaptation, preferring to maintain their own culture and cultural environment within the TL group. By so doing, they tend to maintain social distance and reduce the opportunities to improve their language ability. Instructors of English in Japan have a propensity to get stuck within an English language environment, reducing their ability to use their language skills within their immediate environment. This reduces their chances to interact with TL speakers in the TL that they are studying. Less interaction means greater social distance, less opportunity to hear variations in the TL and less direct input, giving further support to Schumann’s acculturation model.

Although, these factors all impact on the degree to which an individual feels some affinity with the TL group, factor number two above stands out as the most visual indicator of social distance. It is closely connected to how culture is learned. One’s integration pattern is dependant upon how translucent the symbolic walls are that either impede or assist in one’s cultural adaptation and or adjustment.

The second factor mentioned by Schumann and put forward by Ellis (1994), Psychological distance, relates to how comfortable a learner is in relation to the surrounding social affecting factors. Psychological distance disorientates a learner in a way that may cause them to resist opportunities to take full advantage of the social situation. Schumann (1975, as cited in Ushioda, 1993) lists five affective factors that may increase the psychological distance:
1. **Language Shock:** Disorientation caused by learning a new linguistic system.

2. **Culture Shock:** Stress, anxiety and fear caused when entering a new culture, the routines activities suddenly become major obstacles.

3. **Culture Stress:** Prolonged culture shock, such as, homesickness, and questioning self identity.

4. **Motivation:** Instrumental and integrative.

5. **Ego permeability:** The amount in which an individual gives up their differences in favor of the TL group.

   (Ushioda 1993; Ellis 1994)

It is Gardener's work on integrative and instrumental motivation that has been crucial in laying the foundations for the acculturation model. It is necessary to not only consider the general attitude of the learner, but how important they see the need to interact in the TL language and with members of the TL culture, so that opportunities can open up for interaction to take place, thereby reducing the social distance. It was Berry (1989 as cited in Culhane 2004), Ward & Kennedy (1994, as cited in Culhane 2004) who furthered the idea of motivation within a social context with their models of acculturation attitudes.

1. **Integration** (wanting to maintain their first culture and extend relations with new culture)

2. **Assimilation** (wanting to integrate into new culture)

3. **Separation** (wanting to maintain their own culture)

4. **Marginalization** (little concern)
Culhane (2004) discusses different kinds of motivation, and adds a third category to Gardener’s traditional psychological variables, that of psychosocial motivation. The intercultural interaction model joins together Gardener’s instrumental and integrative motivation under the new label of orientation. Culhane (2004) argues that Gardener’s two themes on motivation should be extended to include assessment of the learner perceptions of the importance of using L2 in cultural communities.

Attitudes toward a TL group determine how much a learner is willing to give up of themselves, and whether they value the new ideas within the TL group. They may be affected by many different variables, but appear to be influenced greatly by social variables, as suggested by Schumann (1986). The feelings of superiority/inferiority, differing values, social constructs, and amount of similarity between groups, all impact on how much motivation a learner will have to accept a new culture, and how compatible that culture is with the learner’s own culture.

Culhane (2004) posits that surrounding yourself in the TL environment gives one a better chance of learning an L2. The degree to which a learner is successful in SLA is dependant to some degree on how much contact the learner has with the TL speakers (Schumann 1986). In other words, the more contact a learner has, the more exposure and chances to interact with the TL, and therefore the more input that is received by the learner. Krashen’s input hypothesis attests to the advantages of receiving a lot of input, especially in the initial stages in language acquisition. Both the acculturation model and Krashen’s Monitor model try to lower a learner’s affective filter, and hence make it possible for acquisition to take place. Where Schumann and other social linguists differ to Krashen is in the role of interaction as a
key to success. Krashen’s model appears to put the learner into quite a passive role, whereas, in the acculturation model, the need to interact and be more active is quite evident.

There are many counter arguments that place pressure on the acculturation model to explain why some learners are successful and others not, even though the conditions for acculturation have shown themselves to exist. Schmidt (1983, as cited in Schumann 1986) mentions the example of “Wes”, and how even though conditions of social and psychological closeness were right, the SL learner did not acquire linguistic competence. Kelly (1982, as cited in Schumann 1986) doesn’t see language proficiency as something connected with the degree of acculturation. Stauble (1981, as cited in Schumann 1986) states that there is no evidence that more interaction with TL speakers links to higher language proficiency. England (1982, as cited in Schumann 1986), equates acculturation with integrative motivation; however, somewhat differing to Schumann’s definition of acculturation (as Schumann sees integrative motivation as only one part of Acculturation, whereas, England sees them as being the same). Maple (1982, as cited in Schumann 1986) discusses how social distance equates negatively with SLA.

If acculturation can be considered a unique aspect of SLA, it has to be clearly classified and there needs to be some way of measuring the amount of acculturation that is necessary for successful SLA. Unfortunately, research is still in its infancy, and more longitudinal studies need to be undertaken to correctly determine an adequate measure of the affect of acculturation on learning. Lybek (2002), however, promotes pronunciation as a strong indicator of cultural identification. According to Lybek’s
study, pronunciation was a clear indicator of how much a learner had engaged in a new culture, and found that it may be an indicator of a new cultural identity. She concludes that those who participate more in another culture will by so doing, reduce the cultural distance and therefore acculturate. Therefore being more successful in SLA.

Some people caution against placing social factors so clearly in the forefront as a separate entity. Dash (2003) argues that cultural aspects are quite often, not so readily identifiable, and that individuals may succeed in SLA despite the social conditions. Grouping, can lead to over-generalizing, thus making something vague, or misleading.

There are some learners that will be determined to succeed, irrespective of any of the conditions that present themselves, and those learners that will not be successful, regardless of favorable social circumstances. This implies that individual learner differences, such as learning style and affective state are more distinguishable as attributing factors to SLA, than the social conditions.

According to Damen (1987) there are different kinds of second language learners that go through different amounts of acculturation. Acculturation in this sense follows similar paths to culture learning. The culture-learning continuum begins with an ethnocentric perspective, heading towards one of three states: Assimilation, adaptation and adjustment. Not everyone will be able to reach the state in which they have adjusted fully to another culture and progression along the continuum; the process of acculturation is a dynamic process that takes place over time. Throughout ones life the conditions for SLA alter and the social and psychological distance also changes. Therefore, acculturation should be considered a variable entity, which is
closely connected with feelings toward the TL culture.

Although the acculturation model has been conceived for the second language classroom in the country of the TL language, some of the insights into the acculturation model can be adapted for use in a foreign language situation. Even Maple (1982, as cited in Schumann 1986) supports the idea that acculturation can be useful to not only immigrant groups, but to any language learning situation.

I would like to propose that it is possible for not only the second language teacher in a natural TL environment, but also a foreign language or LOTE teacher can benefit from having an understanding of all the social models of L2 acquisition, including the acculturation, inter-group model, and the socio-educational model.

At the heart of Schumann’s acculturation model, is the notion of social distance and affinity to the TL and TL group, as mentioned above. We can therefore presume that being in the country where a language is spoken can have a significant impact on the learner, their relationship with the language and to the people who speak that language. This is the argument that many give for placing the acculturation model into the very specific role of explaining the social effects of those who immigrate to a country. However, one does not necessarily have to live in the TL group to feel empathy or similarity to it. One just has to look at all those who study language for particular purposes, such as learning Japanese to be able to read ‘Manga’ (Japanese comic books). Learning specific terms to progress in Karate, or studying English to be able to watch Hollywood movies, which is a common reason given by many of my students for why they study.

In addition, being within a TL community does not guarantee successful SLA, as we
have seen earlier in this essay, various factors (such as individual differences), other than social interaction can increase social distance. Although, being in a natural environment may make the conditions ideal to successfully acquire a language, they do not determine the success of language acquisition. There is a complex mingling of different variables that must take place to ensure the best opportunities for language acquisition.

Nevertheless, there is a need for communities or social frameworks to encourage motivation toward the TL. In other words, there needs to be a support network, or access to other like-minded individuals, in order to interact with and learn. One way to do this is via the Internet, which has made it possible to reduce the social distance, without actually having to live in the country where the language is spoken. Social interaction can happen, in real time, with authentic speakers of the TL, through means such as chat rooms, and video conferencing. Therefore, one can theoretically interact with people of the TL within one’s own country, increasing familiarity with the TL and using it in authentic ways, without having to leave one’s own cultural group. The whole point is to expose oneself to the TL and culture, thereby increasing understanding of cultural and language norms.

Furthermore, classrooms in any setting provide environments that help to not only teach language, but to reduce the disorientation to the TL group. Socio-cultural linguists including Edward Sapir consider language as somehow being connected to the social context that it is used (Fromkin 2003). This can also be seen, reflected in the kinds of textbooks available for second language teaching today. Many of the textbooks have a social component within them that looks at either some cultural
issue or to some situational phrases or idiomatic expressions. They tend to include readings, listening activities, or conversational role-plays that illustrate some use of a grammatical structure in context. So learners not only learn the grammatical structures, but the particular pragmatic clues that accompany the language.

Also, Damen (1987) discusses the problem of choosing an effective training model to take into account inter-cultural differences. Sensitivity and cross-cultural awareness is at the center of developing within the learner, a positive attitude toward the TL group. Acculturation is more likely to happen in a situation where the learner feels comfortable in accepting some of the new values and ideals.

Individuals within a cultural group tend to have value systems that are closely defined by their particular group. When they leave that cultural group and enter a new set of values, there may be a situation known as culture shock, if there is high enclosure (not much similarity between cultures). This can either help or hinder an individual’s attempt to try to assimilate or accommodate into the TL group. If an individual doesn’t see the need to question their own values, and maybe give up some of them, they may feel the need to resist, and return to their ethnocentric point of view (Damen, 1987), this is what may happen with many ex-pats, teaching in Japan. They may feel that some of the value systems in Japan are completely opposite to their own. The accumulative effect of the many differences may discourage them from adopting a framework of thinking that will assist their language acquisition. One must be flexible enough to adapt, at least to some extent, to the environment of the TL.

It is necessary for the classroom teacher in either a foreign language or second language setting to expose students to the context within which that language is being
used. Doing so, will undoubtedly open up opportunities to discuss cultural differences. These differences can either be accepted or rejected by individual learners. A teacher with the awareness of how social distance and psychological openness can impact upon language learning may be able to provide learning opportunities that reduce the influence of any negative factor.

Word Count = 3, 360 words

References


Part B

1. *How can knowledge of cognitive or learning styles of his/her learners help a classroom teacher be more effective in the class?*

2. *To which strategies would you try to expose your students? Why?*

3. *Which affective or personality factor do you think has the greatest impact upon second language learning?*

Due Date: Monday, 22\textsuperscript{nd} June, 2007
Cognitive or Learning Styles

1. How can knowledge of cognitive or learning styles of his/her learners help a classroom teacher be more effective in the class?

A burning question (but not the only one) that comes to my mind is; “Are you a lefty or a righty?” It is in this very poignant question that we can begin our look into the question of cognitive/learning styles. “Lefties” have different requirements to so called “righties”. This clearly shows a necessity to focus attention on learner needs. It is a matter of individual preferences, be they intentional or instinctive (for cognitive/learning styles, it would seem the latter), that one must consider in an attempt to understand what the learner brings to the process of learning.

Cognitive or learning styles are the way that individuals process information. They are the tendencies that a learner has when approaching a problem or particular situation. Ellis (1994) among others defines learning styles as the way that individuals approach the task of learning. That is the way that learners perceive information and their ability and bias for ways of processing it (Ellis 1994; Kolb 1979, as cited in Manguhbai, 2007). Brown (2007) states that when learners are dependant upon the link between personality and cognition (mental faculty or process of acquiring knowledge), they are known as cognitive styles, whereas when they incorporate affective and physiological factors, they come under the label of learning styles.

Irrespective of the label, the important consideration is with how a learner internalizes the information that they encounter in their surrounding environment. There are stark differences in how they do this, and to which styles they assume.
Some learners are quite visual, and others more tactile. Other learners process information in a sequential manner, and some have the ability to multi-task (and handle many things at the same time). There are also learners who are quite impulsive, and those who carefully plan out their responses. The significance of this is quite great in that a single stimulus can reap very different responses from learners, due to the way that the individual learners approach the task. Students can have varying levels of success at doing the same task, because of their cognitive/learning style.

In the same respect, a teacher who presents tasks in the same way every time, will undoubtedly disadvantage some students, because the teacher will not be taking into account the individual students approach to the task. Understanding the need to vary the teaching style, will help open up opportunities for all students, and give them chances at experiencing tasks that more closely resemble their own preferences. Of course, it is not possible to satisfy all learning styles all the time, however, it is important to adjust the learning experience, so that it will satisfy different students at different times (Mangubhai, 2007).

There are a number of different cognitive/learning styles that focus on various aspects of an individual learners make-up, as stated above (personality, cognition, affective and physiological factors). For the sake of space, a detailed list of the styles is included in appendix 1: Cognitive/Learning Styles. For ease of reading, the following is a brief list of the main styles as listed in Mangubhai, (2007).
Cognitive Styles

- Visual/Haptic Style
- Visualiser/Verbaliser
- Levelling/Sharpening
- Serialist/Holist
- Conceptual Style

Learning Styles

- Kolb’s (1979) learning styles relate to the individual preference for perceiving and processing of information (concrete experiential, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation)
- Dunn and Dunn discuss learning styles in relation to environmental, sociological, emotional and physical factors
- Grash-Reichmann focuses on social interaction (participant, avoidant, collaborative and competitive).
- Gregorc also relate to perception and ways of processing (concrete, abstract, sequential, and random).

(Mangubhai, 2007)
As we can see the distinction between cognitive styles and learning styles is in their focus. The cognitive styles center on information gathering and organizing, whereas the learning styles converge on the task of perceiving and processing of the information. A benefit of understanding the different styles would be the ability to understand that a learning task can be broken down into elements that help either cognitive development or the dissemination of information.

Knowing a learners style can help in understanding their particular needs and inadequacies. A visual learner in the context of tactile experiences may struggle with a task. For instance, someone who prefers reading may have a great deal of difficulty in a listening focused class. Many of my college students often request the tape script to the listening tasks that we undertake. They comment on how difficult it is to understand, just by listening, and feel more confident with the written text. When offered the audio CD to take home, they still insist on the tape script. This leads one to a somewhat subjective conclusion that these students have a cognitive style that is more visual in its orientation.

Other learning styles may lead to error by the learner in how they understand the information that is available. For example, students displaying the learning style that Jonassen & Grabowski (1993, as cited in Mangubhai, 2007) refer to as “Levelling” (See appendix 1: Cognitive/Learning Styles), may be more prone to generalizing of information (which may lead to oversimplification), rather than differentiating it into precise categories. Error in information retrieval may cause interference in overall performance, and communication. Students will often make mistakes with directions, answer questions that haven’t been asked, or come to
conclusions that have no basis within the initial information. Also, I often see within the college in which I work, where teachers ask students if they have understood the directions. All students respond with varying levels of affirmation. However, when the task gets underway, some students begin doing something completely “off-task”. Is this a tendency to interpret information in a leveler type way, or is it some other kind of cognitive style? Knowing that students have a tendency to misinterpret or over-generalize information, an instructor may be able to modify their instructions, thereby adding extra instructional steps to check understanding, before proceeding with further instructions.

It is important to note that individuals are not pigeonholed into just one style, but favor one or two particular styles (Gregorc 1984, as cited in Mangubhai, 2007). Understanding students learning styles, a teacher is able to better understand which kinds of tasks are suitable with which kind of student. If we know that a student fits within say, Kolb’s concrete experiential category (See appendix 1: Cognitive/Learning Styles), we also know that they can either be labeled a “Diverger” or an “Accommodator”. This can tell an instructor a great deal about their preferences in learning. “Divergers” prefer concrete experiences, as do accommodators. Though, there is a difference is in how they internalize the information. Having this knowledge, an instructor can choose a task that is more concrete; yet allow different ways for learners to deal with the task. The Diverger can reflect upon the task, searching for holistic ways to express the information, such as in discussion, whereas, an accommodator can put the information into action, maybe in a project, or within the context of a speaking class; they can participate in a debate.
Knowledge of cognitive/learning styles not only helps the teacher, but also can be beneficial for the learner. Knowing which style is favored, and the advantages and disadvantages of each style, a learner can orientate their learning to maximize their overall success in learning. For instance, a learner may find out that they are quite competitive, and that they need to seek out tasks that involve competition, in order to get the stimulation to be instrumentally motivated. Learners may however, want to work on developing other deficient learning styles that help make them more rounded as a learner. A ‘Diverger’ may feel that they find it difficult to make decisions, and want to develop their problem solving skills. Knowing their learning style orientation can identify the need, and therefore make it possible for them to seek out activities that challenge them.

Learning Strategies

2. To which strategies would you try to expose your students? Why?

Is there such a notion as the ‘good language learner’? (CARLA, Retrieved June 9, 2007) To understand which kind of strategy/strategies to expose students to, it is necessary to identify the purpose of choosing a strategy, which in SLA is to make the most efficient use of time, resources and the effort that it takes to learn a second language. A good learner as such, will be one that is able to be strategic in their approach to language learning, as an undisciplined approach has the potential to make the task more complicated, time consuming, or maybe impossible. ‘A learner without strategies is like a driver without a road map.’ It is possible to get
to the final destination, but how one gets there, and the effort that one expends is very different. Being able to read the map and see short cuts will get you to your objective in a more efficient way. Therefore, the notion of a good language learner, should encompass someone who can use the most effective strategies to obtain their overall objective, that of learning, and hopefully acquiring a second language.

Identifying what exactly is meant by the term ‘Strategy’, the various kinds, and the purpose of using a particular strategy is more easily said than done. Ellis (1994) states in very easy to understand terminology, that the concept of language learning strategies remains “fuzzy”. The reason for this is that linguists are still at odds with the terminology, looking at strategies as techniques (Stern 1992), tactics (Seliger, 1984), learning behaviors, or approaches (Chamot, 1987). Given the confusion over wording, there is a general idea that learning strategies are various ways in which learners can help their acquisition and use of a language. Ellis (1994) defines different strategies into three categories as production (attempt to use one’s linguistic system), communication (attempts to deal with problems of communication) and learning strategies (attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence). The last of these can be divided into either language learning strategies (attempt to learn about the TL) or skill learning strategies (attempt to become skilled learners). Also Cohen (1996) puts forward a broad idea that second language learner strategies involve second language learning and second language use strategies. That is the strategies that help improve learning or the strategies that improve the use of the TL. Also, according to Griffiths (2004), learning strategies consciously influence learning, as opposed to Krashen’s monitor/acquisition model, which postulates that learning
cannot be consciously learned, but acquired.

To continue with the metaphor mentioned above, likening the language learner to the driver, it is important to note that there are many roads that lead to the same destination. That is, although the objective is to learn a language, different learners may arrive at the objective through different means. The choice of which would be dependant on many factors including individual learning styles, environmental influences and motivational factors. It is not clear with all the definitions whether the strategies need to be considered as conscious actions becoming automated through use, and therefore becoming subconscious, or whether they are purposeful conscious actions.

In attempting to help a student make the best use of the strategies that are open to them, it is necessary to consider a number of different factors as listed in CARLA (Center of advanced research on language acquisition), which include:

1. The nature of the task
2. The characteristics of the learner
3. Language learning aptitude
4. Prior experience with other languages
5. Motivation, cultural background, age, and personality
6. Language being learned
7. Learner’s level of proficiency

(CARLA, retrieved June 9, 2007)

Learners will adopt strategies that correspond with either of two aspects, the ease of use within a particular task and how closely it fits in with their learning style. Yet,
over time, learners can become aware of their own tendencies and begin broadening their learning styles and opening up opportunities to use a greater variety of learning styles.

The choice of learning strategies is dependant upon these two aspects and will need to take into account the following considerations:

1. Cognitive aspects: Direct thinking about the problem, and synthesis of the stimulus.

2. Meta-cognitive aspects: Understanding of the cognitive processes that go into planning, regulating, monitoring and evaluating their effectiveness.

3. Socio-affective: Concerning how the learner interacts with their immediate environment.

(Mangubhai, 2007)

As a teacher, I would need to approach each student individually, and assess their needs within the framework of the task and in terms of their individual learning styles. There are a number of online questionnaires, which measure a person’s perceived learning style, such as the one created by Soloman and Felder; Index of Learning Styles Questionnaire (retrieved, June 12, 2007) or Jester’s Learning Style Survey (2000, retrieved, June 12, 2007). Alternatively I may want to focus on the specific task and give the learners a questionnaire that focuses on the particular skill area under consideration. I may also contemplate a general strategy match questionnaire as proposed by James Madison University (retrieved June 12, 2007). Once a good idea of the learner’s preferences is known, a teacher can determine the best course of action.
Teachers should act as facilitators, helping learners find the best strategies, and the right moments to use them within their own learning. There is a vast array of strategies to use, each focusing on different aspects of learning. These taxonomies have been created to account for the above three aspects, and as listed in appendix 4: learning strategies. They differ in their perspectives, and how they define a learning strategy.

In addition, learners at different levels are capable of utilizing different strategies. Lower level students for example, would find inferencing strategies difficult, as it is a higher-level skill, according to Blooms hierarchical taxonomy. So, instructors need to be sensitive with the cognitive level of a student. Also, the age of the learner may influence which meta-cognitive strategies one can use. Adults may be able to make use of monitoring and self-assessment techniques more efficiently than young children. However, adults may have more need for affective strategies than children, as perception of their own ability is heightened, whereas, children are more egocentric in their learning.

Word Count = 1,046 words

Affective Factors

3. Which affective or personality factor do you think has the greatest impact upon second language learning?

Are you emotionally up to the task of learning a new language? This may be a good question to ask, as the process leading to acquisition of a target language may be influenced by emotional and attitudinal states, which either assist in or provide
resistance to language learning. Linguists such as Krashen (1985, as cited in Mangubhai 2007) even state that there is an affective filter that prevents acquirers from fully utilizing the comprehensible input that they receive. As Krashen puts it, a block in the ability to access the LAD (language acquisition device), when a learner is either nervous, or unmotivated for some reason interferes with the learner’s successful acquisition of the TL.

Bloom’s (1956) taxonomy of educational objectives lists three areas, including affective, psychomotor, and cognitive domains that help shape our understanding of how learners approach the task of learning a new language. Bloom’s affective variables, include receiving (passive), responding (participation), valuing (attaching value), organizing (comparing, relating and elaborating on), and characterizing (value exerts influence on their behavior). They relate to how people react emotionally to a stimulus, such as a learning situation or being placed within a natural situation where the use of a TL is needed.

Various factors have been identified, giving a name to various states within these particular affective variables, each taking a unique perspective within the emotional state of the individual. They are:

1. **Anxiety** – uneasiness: either state anxiety (unpleasant emotional arousal in a particular situation) or trait anxiety (general tendency towards having anxiety)

2. **Extroversion/Introversion** – need for ego enhancement and self esteem

3. **Risk taking** – willingness to guess/appear foolish

4. **Empathy** – put oneself into another’s situation
5. **Self esteem** – a person’s subjective appraisal of himself or herself.

(Mangubhai, 2007)

In trying to understand which of the above factors is most influential, it is necessary to think about which factor will limit the amount of comprehensible input, or access to devices that organize the input, such as Chomsky’s LAD. Although a very subjective observation, the above factors all seem to have varying degrees of influence, however, Anxiety and self-esteem appear to have the closest connection, influencing a learner not only individually, but in an accumulative way.

Looking at the above factors, it is possible to contemplate a number of situations in which both anxiety and self-esteem compete and influence each other in either assisting a language learner or in raising up Krashen’s affective filter. For example, a learner can be turned on to a task through encouragement, even though there is high anxiety.

Although anxiety of situations can cause learners to utilize avoidance strategies to handle nervousness and any unpleasantness, positive feedback can overpower anxiety in a way that boosts self-esteem and confidence in an individual’s ability, making the effect of anxiety either weaker or negligible. Looking at a more practical situation, one could see a learner in a situation where a teacher praises the correct use of a grammatical form, or natural use of pronunciation. The praise could encourage a student to enter similar situations or take risks more often with similar language items. Increased exposure and less fear of making mistakes could lower the affective filter and enable more opportunity to acquire the target language.
In contrast, negative feedback can do the opposite. It can increase anxiety about situations in which the TL has to be used and reduce confidence and self-esteem within the individual. Negative feedback can make a person ‘clam up,’ and not want to even attempt using the target language. In the college where I work, there are many examples of students getting bad scores on tests, and those scores in turn influencing their performance in future classes.

Affective or personality factors seem to have varying degrees of influence on individuals. It would seem that no one aspect, but varying factors influence each other and have an accumulative affect on an individual’s second language acquisition. Therefore it is necessary to consider the possibility that the above five factors interplay on varying levels, either promoting an environment that is conducive to successful language acquisition, or not. The classroom teacher must assess which variables are involved, and how they are relating to each other, and then think about an appropriate course of action.

Word Count = 720 words

References


Cohen, A. (1996) Second language learning and use strategies: clarifying the issues, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis


### Appendix 1: Cognitive and Learning Styles

#### Cognitive Style

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Further details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visualiser/Verbaliser</td>
<td>An individual's preference for visual/verbal stimuli in both accessing and processing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Levelling/Sharpening   | relates to the way individuals perceive and memorize. | * There is a shift from leveller to sharpener with age.  
* **Levellers**  
  - memory less differentiated  
  - prone to generalizations  
  - miss changes and inconsistencies  
  - Simplify recall |
| Serialist/Holist       | **Serialist**  
  - Linear sequence processing  
  **Holist**  
  - Can deal with several things at one time. | **Holist**  
  - able to cope with top-down and bottom-up processing |
| Conceptual Style       | Analytical - differentiates between objects  
  Relational - Classifies thematically |                                                                                  |

(Compiled from Mangubhai, 2007)

#### Learning Style

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Further details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Concrete Experiential | Tangible, felt qualities of immediate experience | **Positive**  
  - see many perspectives  
  - relate well to others  
  - broad cultural interests  
**Negative**  
  - less concern for theories or generalizations  
  - less systematic/scientific  
  - less able to apply ideas |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflective Observation</th>
<th>Internal reflection of the external world.</th>
<th>Internal reflection of the external world.</th>
<th>Positive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diverger/Accommodator</td>
<td>Internal reflection of the external world.</td>
<td>Internal reflection of the external world.</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assimilator</td>
<td>Internal reflection of the external world.</td>
<td>Internal reflection of the external world.</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internal reflection of the external world.</td>
<td>Internal reflection of the external world.</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Positive:
- good at inductive reasoning
- Show sound logic/precision
- good organizers of information
- take systematic/scientific approach.

Negative:
- lesser focus on people
- not action orientated
- show less ability to make decisions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abstract Conceptualization</th>
<th>Comprehend information conceptually and symbolically.</th>
<th>Converger - grasp through abstract conceptualization and transform through action.</th>
<th>Positive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assimilator/Converger</td>
<td>Comprehend information conceptually and symbolically.</td>
<td>Converger - grasp through abstract conceptualization and transform through action.</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Converger - grasp through abstract conceptualization and transform through action.</td>
<td>Converger - grasp through abstract conceptualization and transform through action.</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Positive:
- good problem solving, hypothetical and deductive reasoning
- good ability at selecting the correct answer.
- ability to create new ways of thinking and can apply ideas practically.

Negative:
- close minded, unimaginative, lesser focus on people and feelings
- less able to deal with social/interpersonal issues
- less emphasis on observation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Active Experimentation</th>
<th>Extend the environment by external manipulation</th>
<th>Accommodator - prefer concrete experiences which are transformed through action.</th>
<th>Positive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Converger/Accommodator</td>
<td>Extend the environment by external manipulation</td>
<td>Accommodator - prefer concrete experiences which are transformed through action.</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extend the environment by external manipulation</td>
<td>Accommodator - prefer concrete experiences which are transformed through action.</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Positive:
- results orientated & adapt
- seek out new experiences
- people orientated and open minded

Negative:
- don’t rely on own analytic ability,
- less systematic/scientific
- tend to disregard theory
- trial and error approach to problem solving

(Compiled from Mangubhai, 2007)
## Appendix 2: Characteristics of Learning Styles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theorist</th>
<th>Learning Styles</th>
<th>Types of Learner</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dunn and Dunn (1978)</td>
<td>1. Environmental</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Environmental</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Sociological</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Quiet/noisy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Emotional</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Bright/dark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Physical</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Cool/warm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Floor/in bed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Sociological</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Learn on own/need to please others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Emotional</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Conform/not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Conform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Motivated or not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Show persistence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Physical</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Auditory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Visual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Tactile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Kinesthetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Best time of day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Ability to sit still</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grasha-Reichmann</td>
<td>Perception vs. Processing</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>- Degree of involvement in the classroom</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social interaction</td>
<td>Individuals can use all, but are predisposed to one or two.</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>- Extent to which learners see learning as Collaborative or Competitive</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>- Attitude toward the teacher</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gregoric (1984)</td>
<td>1. Concrete</td>
<td>1 concrete sequential</td>
<td>1. Prefer hands on experience in orderly, logical and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sequential</td>
<td>2 concrete random</td>
<td>sequential manner.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Random</td>
<td>3 abstract sequential</td>
<td>- Prefer to experiment with ideas and concepts in trial and error method.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 abstract random</td>
<td>- prefer stimulus rich environment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Prefer to experiment with ideas and concepts in trial and error method.

3. - Strong in verbal ability
   - able to relate concepts to input through reading, hearing, graphic and pictorial form

4. Absorb information holistically and evaluate through personal experience.
   - good at seeing relationships b/w people, ideas, places and things
   - Greater emphasis on relationships
   - Attuned to mood and atmosphere.

(Compiled from Mangubhai, 2007)
Appendix 3: Learner Factors

**Beliefs about language learning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learner Factors</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Strategy use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger</td>
<td>Employ Strategies in:</td>
<td>Strong factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Task specific way</td>
<td>- Learner’s beliefs about language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Often simple</td>
<td>- Learner factors (age + motivation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older</td>
<td>- Make use of generalized strategies</td>
<td>- Personal background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Strategies are more complex and sophisticated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- explains why older children and adults learn faster initially than young children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Why this advantage is more evident in grammar and vocabulary (many strategies) rather than pronunciation (few strategies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aptitude</strong></td>
<td>Not related to strategy use.</td>
<td>Weak factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>However, better aptitude = better able to talk about strategy use.</td>
<td>- Affective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning Style</strong></td>
<td>Use of learning strategies strongly connected to learning style</td>
<td>- aptitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Oxford 1989)</td>
<td></td>
<td>- learning style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivation</strong></td>
<td>- Causal effect on the amount of strategies a learner employs</td>
<td>Strategy use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other important factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personality Types</strong></td>
<td>No reliable link between personality types and strategy use.</td>
<td>- Situational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learner’s Personal Background</strong></td>
<td>Considerable evidence to support the link btw learner’s personal backgrounds and strategy use.</td>
<td>- Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Situational and Social factors</strong></td>
<td>The setting where language learning takes place.</td>
<td>- Which language?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Micro-differences (individual learning setting) have greater effect on strategy use</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

35
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality</th>
<th>Setting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Type of learning task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sex</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Successful language learning**

- Concern for language form
- Concern for communication
- Active task approach
- Awareness of learning process
- Capacity to use strategies flexibly for the task.

(Compiled from Mangubhai, 2007)
## Appendix 4: Learning Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Notion of:</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
<th>Typology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cognitive</strong></td>
<td>- Steps or operations used in problem solving that require direct analysis, or synthesis of learning materials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strategy vs. Technique (Stern 1983)</td>
<td>1. Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(i) Consciousness - conscious actions (through use) becoming automatized so they are used subconsciously</td>
<td>2. Active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Promote linguistic knowledge (Bialystok 1985)</td>
<td>3. Empathetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Behavior that influences encoding process (Weinstein &amp; Mayer 1986)</td>
<td>4. Formal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Approaches that facilitate recall (Chamot 1987)</td>
<td>5. Experimental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Contribute to development of a system (Rubin 1987)</td>
<td>6. Semantic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Special thoughts and behavior that help learners learn, comprehend or retain information. (O’Malley &amp; Chamot 1990)</td>
<td>7. Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Metacognitive Strategies (O’Malley &amp; Chamot 1990)</td>
<td>8. Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meta-Cognitive</strong></td>
<td>- make use of the knowledge about cognitive processes and constitute an attempt to regulate learning by means of planning, monitoring and evaluating</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(ii) Intentionality - Conscious action as opposed to subconscious action</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Socio-affective</strong></td>
<td>Concern the ways in which learners elect to interact with other learners and native speakers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>O’Malley &amp; Chamot (1990) Metacognitive Strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1. Planning * Previewing the main ideas and concepts in material by skimming. * Directed attention</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cognitive Strategies: - Resourcing - Repetition - Grouping - Deduction/ Induction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Social Mediation: - Question for clarification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Direct Strategies

* Oxford (1990)

1. **Memory Strategies**
   - creating mental images
   - applying images & sounds
   - Reviewing well
   - Employing action

2. **Cognitive Strategies**
   - Practicing
   - Receiving & sending messages
   - Analyzing & reasoning
   - Creating structure for input & output

3. **Compensation Strategies**
   - Guessing intelligently
   - Overcoming limitations in speaking & writing

### Indirect Strategies

* Create the conditions that lead to learning

1. **Metacognitive Strategies**
   - Centering your learning
   - Arranging & planning your time
   - Evaluating your learning

2. **Affective Strategies**
   - Lowering your anxiety
   - Encouraging yourself
   - Taking your emotional temperature

3. **Social Strategies**
   - Asking questions
   - Co-operating with others.
   - Empathizing with others.

(Compiled from Mangubhai, 2007; Ellis, 1994)